



# NATIONAL SPORTING LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

A Research Center for Turf and Field Sports, their History and Social Significance

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## Seventeenth Century Racehorse Training Manuals Gallop, Amble and Trot

A. Mackay-Smith



HORSE RACING, an illustration from the NSL's 2nd edition, 1710 Blome's *The Gentleman's Recreation: Treating of Horsemanship, Hawking, Hunting, Fowling, Fishing and Agriculture*.

During the 16th and 17th centuries it was generally held that no running race horse could attain his maximum speed unless he had previously been trained so as to be proficient in performing the lateral gaits.

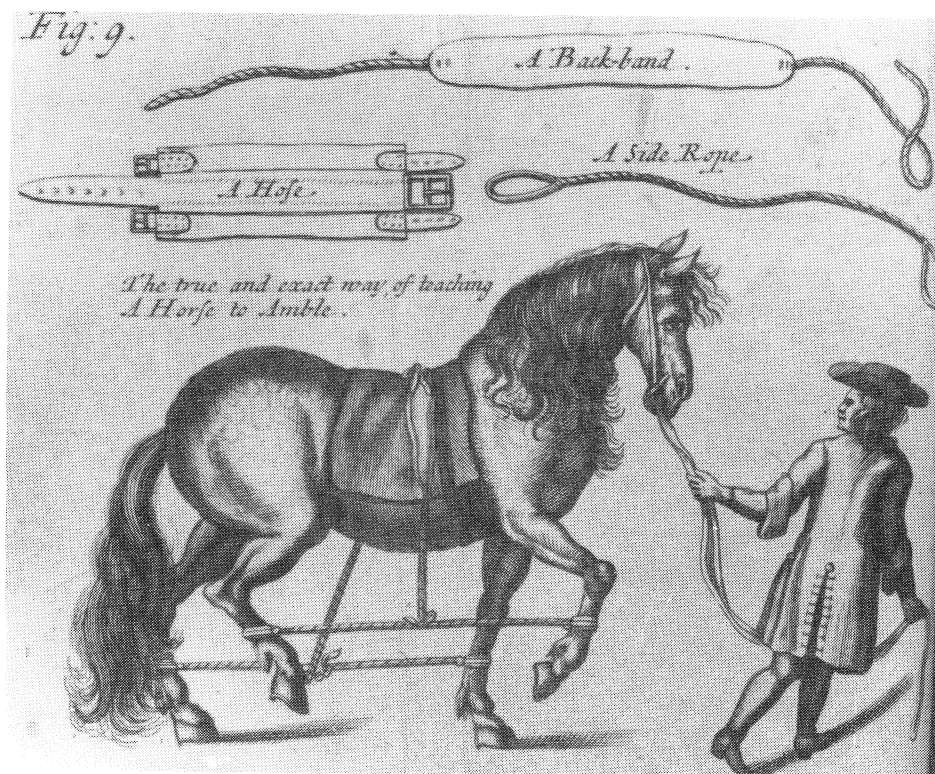
In 1593 there was published in London *A Discourse of Horsemanship—the manner to chuse, trayne, ryde and dyet, both Hunting-horses and Running-horses*. It was the first book written by Gervase Markham, the 17th century's most prolific author on agricultural subjects of all descriptions, particularly horses.

This treatise was probably the most popular manual on training race horses ever to appear in print—with slight variations, under its original title seven times from 1593-1606; under *Cavelarice* twice, 1607, 1617; under *Cheap and Good Husbandry*, *Countrey Contentments* and *The Complete Farrier* once each 1616, 1615, 1639; under *The Perfect Horseman* seven times 1655-1684; and under *Markham's Masterpiece* nine times 1680-1734, all of these with Markham's name on the title page, a total of twenty-nine times.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, there being no copyright laws, this same text was shamelessly appropriated and printed in several other books on riding and on farriery.

In choosing a horse for galloping Markham recommends one which is also a good ambler, "for an Ambling Horse will immediately be brought to Gallop, by reason it consists almost of the same nature with it, only a slower and not so much straining."

Note that the amble of the 17th century



Trammels or traves from the 1696 de Solleysell-Hope *The Parfait Mareschal, or a most Compendious and Excellent Treatise of Riding...*, a method of teaching a horse to amble. NSL Collection.

British race horse emphasized high action of the forelegs and low, “daisy cutting” action of the hind legs, quite different from the gait of the present-day Standardbred pacing harness race horses. In his handsomely printed and beautifully illustrated book *The Gentleman's Recreation: Treating of Horsemanship, Hawking, Hunting, Fowling, Fishing and Agriculture*, first published 1686, Richard Blome explains further:

As for AMBLERS, they should move roundly and equally their Hind quarters exactly accompanying their fore; and if the Persons that ride them make but a little motion with their Bodies, 'tis a certain Sign that they go well, not only the Amble, but the Step; but the best Observation of all concerning them, is to take notice if they over-lay, that is, with their hind foot the print of their fore Feet, for the more they do it, the better they Amble, because they must considerably ply the Haunches, which is the perfection of the Amble.

Insistence on the amble as the proper gait to precede and follow the gallop appears in Browne—*His fiftie years practice. Or an exact Discourse concerning Snaffle Riding, for Trotting and Ambling of all manner of Horses whatsoever from one degree to another, till they be per fit both for the Trot and Amble, a subject never as yet published by any heretofore by WILLIAM BROWNE, Gent., Printed by Nicholas Okes and sold by*

J. Piper, London 1624. Browne writes:

When you come to some faire gravell ground, you may make him change true-ly to his gallop, so keepe him in his gallop some twelve score, and then you must bring him backe to his amble againe. You must not in any case put him out of his trot into his gallop, but you must bring him out of his trot into his pace againe, then you may put him into his gallop, and so change him from his pace to his gallop at your pleasure.

The amble continued to be esteemed as basic training for the running race horse. In 1708 there was published in London *The Gentleman's New Jockey or Farriers Approved Guide, with a second part containing many rare and new secrets*, by L.G. On page 146 the author says that “the true Amble is the justest measure a Horse can take to ground him in and render him sensible of all other motions.

Throughout the various editions of his *Discourse of Horsemanshippe* Markham recommends the rack as well as the amble for warming up and cooling out during the training of a running race horse. He writes:

As to the first two weeks, immediately after his being taken from pasture—[in the morning] you may gallop him easily, then walk him in your hand a foot pace or a small amble that he may cool by degrees. —In the Evening keep him in a continual

Chapter five of *The Third Booke* is entitled *How to bring a Colt to a true Rake [rack]*. Baret wrote: “except a horse can demean himselfe well in this (as hee ought) he shall neither gallop truly, nor maintain his speed durably, (howsoever the contrary may bee imagined): for that is the ground of all other partes of Horsemanshippe, (not onely in this but also in any other) as the Gamuth [scale] is, for him that learneth to sing.

The last such compendium of the 17th century was *A Supplement of Horsemanship—or A most Compendious and Excellent Treatise of Riding—Being a Collection, taken from the Best and most Modern Writers upon that Subject. The whole Collected and Methodized*, by Sir William Hope of Kirklistown, Kt.,—Edinburgh, 1696. His Chapter XLII is headed “The modern way of preparing running Horses—

Under the sub-head “the first Fort-night” the text reads: “When you are mounted, rack the Horse a foot pace, for a mile or two (for you must neither Amble nor Trot, because they are booth prejudicial to speed or swiftness) upon smooth and equal ground.—There gallop him gently and when you have thus exercised him take him down to some fresh River. After he has drunk, rack him away very easily. After noon—cloath, saddle, lead him forth; then mountaing, rack him abroad, galloping him gently, and, after Water, rack him home to the Stable door.”

The many changes which have marked the evolution of the Thoroughbred during the past 200 years are emphasised by motion, either Galloping or short pacing, which many give the Term of Racking—.

When the horse was not a natural ambler, Markham advocated the use of trammels, also called traves. This 17th century equivalent of the hobbles are currently used on pacing Standardbred horses in harness races. Michael Baret in his 1618 volume *An Hipponomie or Vineyard of Horsemanship*. Printed by George Eld, London 1618, divided into three Books, the first *The Theoretick Part*, the second *The Practicke Part of Pacing*, the third *The Art of Breeding and Dieting Horses*, decries the use of such artificial devices and explains “how to bring an horse—to a faire and commendable pace, only by the hand”—on the reins.

Taken from *The Colonial Quarter Race Horse*, A. Mackay-Smith, published 1983.

# The Eighteenth Century Riding Habit

Karen V. Smith

Women began wearing what is commonly called a riding habit in the 1660's, the female's adaptation of the man's wide-skirted riding coat worn in the late 17th century. This custom was not easily accepted by the men according to the *Diary of Samuel Pepys*, June 12, 1666.

"Walking here in the galleries I find the Ladies of Honour dressed in their riding garbs, with coats and doublets with deep skirts, just for all the world like mine; and buttoned their doublets up to the breast, with periwigs and with hats; so that only for a long petticoat dragging under their men's coats nobody could take them for women in any point whatever; which was an odd sight, and a sight that did not please me."



Lady Worsley chose a scarlet riding habit based on the uniform of her husband's regiment, the Hants Militia, for her 1779 portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds.

The same opinion came from Thomas Ellwood's *A Looking Glass for the Times*, 1670.

"Some Women (Oh the shame!) like ramping Rigs, Ride flaunting in their powder'd Perriwigs; Astride they sit (and not ashamed neither), Drest up like men in Jacket, Cap, and Feather!"

But by the middle of the 18th century the riding habit was accepted not only as an outfit for riding, but also as a morning dress, a traveling dress or as being suitable for any outdoor activity. Ann Buck states in her book *Dress in Eighteenth Century England*:

"Mrs. Delany's younger sister, having traveled to London in 1737, was taken straight into the company 'just as I was in my riding dress and cap.' While she was in London she acquired a new habit, 'which I shall long to wear but I think I must keep it for some extraordinary occasion it being too great a beauty for vulgar rides or visits'. And in 1783 Mary Hamilton one day entered in her diary that on getting up she had her hair dressed for the day, though she put on as usual a riding habit for the morning."

Riding habits were made by tailors rather than by dressmakers as shown by the numerous advertisements of the period. From the *Virginia Gazette*:

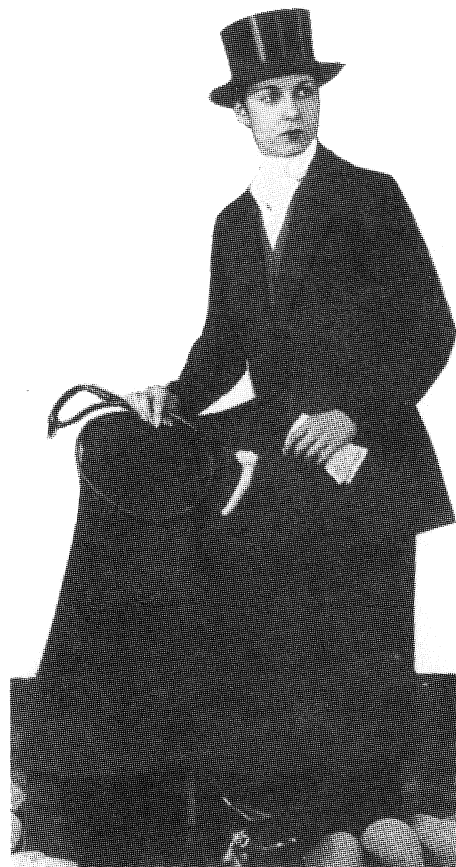
November 6, 1766

Stephen Buck, tailor, from London, begs leave to inform his customers, and others, that he has removed from the Red Lyon to a house adjoining Mr. Attorney's; where he continues to carry on his business with the greatest expedition. Gentlemen and others, who please to favour him with their custom, may depend upon being well served, with the genteel taste and newest fashions, and no pains spared to merit a continuance of their favours.

N.B. Ladies Riding Habits neatly made, and five percent discount for ready money.

March 12, 1767

Nathaniel Keith and John Hatch, tailors, Propose, by the favour of their friends and the publick, to carry on their business in all its branches, in the shop opposite to Mr. John Greenhow's store, on the main street in Williamsburg, where Gentlemen may depend on having their clothes made in the best manner and newest fashion: Also,



The "newest Nardi Astride Hunting Coat" "copyrighted and approved by the best authorities and recognized as the proper habit for the occasion." An advertisement appearing in the 1938 *Horse & Horseman*. NSL Collection.

Ladies riding habits made in the most fashionable manner.

N.B. I take this opportunity to inform my customers that they may depend on having their clothes made with as great care and despatch as when I was formerly in business, and shall be glad of their future favours.

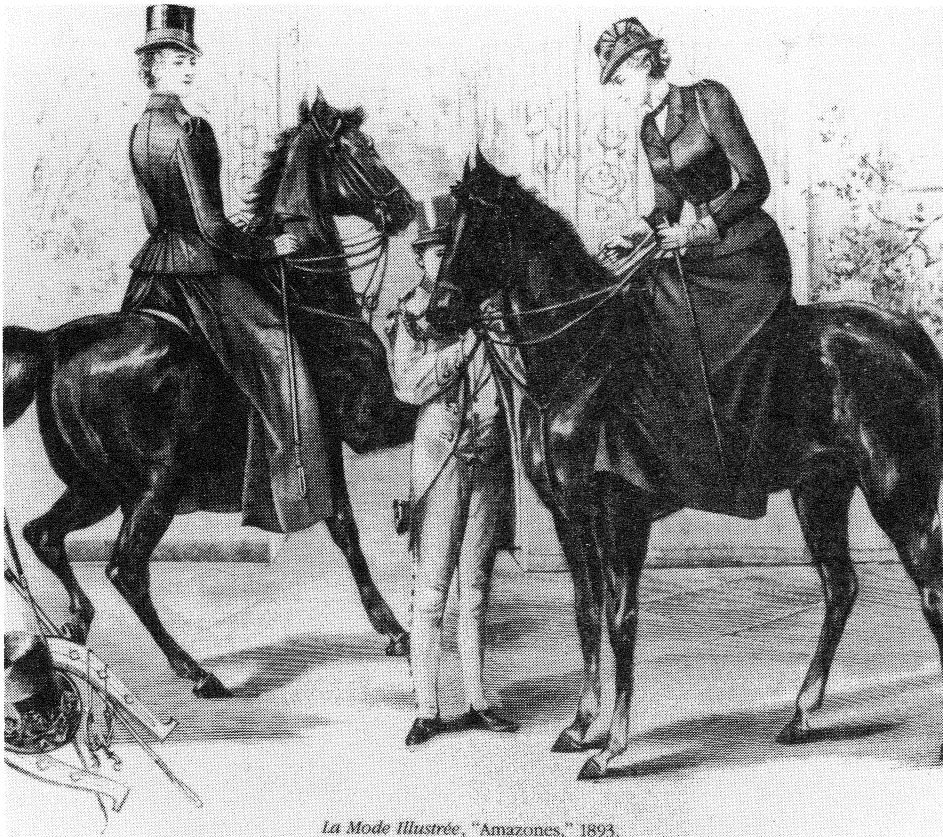
Nathaniel Keith

Virginia Gazette (Purdie)

January 26, 1776

Archibald Diddey, tailor, Williamsburg, Returns his employers in general, and his old customers in particular, the most cordial thanks for past services, and shall always be ready to execute any command which they may hereafter entrust him with. As his family is extensive; journeymen's wages very high, and his creditors exceedingly solicitous for their due, he hopes those whose accounts have been long standing will not take it amiss should be earnestly entreat them to make immediate payment; and those for whom he shall in future do business, it is expected, will not hesitate to tender down the cash as soon as their work is done. Ladies





*La Mode Illustrée*, "Amazones," 1893.

"Amazones", *La Mode Illustrée* 1893, shows the split-skirt for riding astride as well as the more conventional safety skirt for riding side-saddle.

*riding habits are still made by him, on the shortest notice. He remains the public's most obedient humble servant, Francis Street, January 25, 1776.*

The habit consisted of a jacket, waistcoat or false waistcoat with fronts sewn in the jacket, skirt with or without train, shirt with or without tie, hat and gloves. The petticoats (multiple) and jacket were made out of silk, satin, gro-grain, damask atlas, tabby, paduasoy, chintz, gingham, mohair and Indian cloth. Linsey woolsey and calico was used for casual wear and by the less wealthy, velvet was chiefly reserved for ladies of the court.

Early in the 18th century the habits were highly decorated with elaborate trim, the waistcoats and jackets were long in length and the jackets did not have collars. The petticoats were long and full. The women wore three cornered hats, which were only worn when riding, and wigs. The most popular colors for the riding habits were shades of red, blue, brown and yellow. Riding jackets and the petticoats may have matched or made of contrasting materials and colors. If the jacket and petticoat matched the waistcoat was usually a contrasting color.

The major influence on fashion at this

time was the French court, later in the century it became common for ladies to have their habits styled after their husband's military uniform. The preferred newer style then patterned itself in the English countryside manner, with plain, durable, shorter jackets.

Around 1750, the 'joseph' or 'josie' came into popularity. This was a woman's long riding coat, with a cape attached. A tailor's advertisement:

*(Purdie and Dixon) - February 4, 1768*

*All persons indebted to the subscriber are defined to make payment before the 20th of February next, otherwise their accounts will be put into an attorney's hands, without further notice. Mens clothes, roquelaures, huffar cloaks, Ladies riding habits, josephs, etc. made in the newest fashion, and completest manner, for ready money only, by their humble servant.*

Thomas Llewellyn

Later on, about 1785, a longer riding coat called a 'great coat' or 'riding coat' came into fashion. It was styled after a coachman's coat of the period, with lapels like a joseph, but longer in length with a double or triple cape or collar.

Quilted under-petticoats and pantaloons were worn for warmth in cold weather. Overgarments of heavy material, to protect the wearer from dirt, wind and weather while riding, were called safety guards and were worn from the 17th century through the 18th century.

Women gave up the long full petticoats in the 19th century, perhaps following the example of Elizabeth of Austria, the most beautiful and fashion-conscious horsewoman of the century. The Empress rode and hunted on an international scale, traveling by special train with at least sixteen riding habits, usually in the latest style of dark blue. Brigitte Hamann writes in *The Imperial Style: Fashioning of the Hapsburg Era*, Elizabeth

*had herself sewn into her riding habit every morning, and to the dismay of the prudish English aristocracy, she did not wear a petticoat under her habit; her only undergarment was a very soft chemise of the finest kid, which was as tight as a second skin. Naturally, she had herself sewn into that every morning too . . . The severe, tight cut of the riding habit underlined her height . . . Never before or after were ladies' riding habits as elegant or refined as in the 1880s, when Elisabeth set the pace for the fashion on the parcours. Never had riding been as fashionable for ladies of society.*

The desire of women to have riding skirts in the latest style resulted in occasional embarrassing situations; more seriously, a fall could find the rider's skirts caught, adding to the risk of injury. Finally, the 'safety skirt' was introduced in 1875. The skirt could be opened in the back while the rider was in the saddle and fastened again when on the ground. In 1893, a design for riding astride, which looks like the modern split-skirt or culotte, was shown in *La Mode Illustrée Amazones*. Even though wearing masculine style boots and breeches underneath, women still preferred the outward appearance of wearing a skirt.

Formalization of women's riding habits came about with regulations specifying proper dress for hunting and showing. These regulations, adopted by the various hunt and show associations, are found in the AHSA Rule Book, Baily's Hunting Directory, Manuel de Venerie and the USET Rule Book. They uphold the standards of safety, comfort, durability, suitability and timeless fashion.

Karen Smith, a NSL Friend, is the Head Stable Groom for the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. She is the author of several articles on colonial saddlery, horsemanship and horse breeding. Additional notes by Judith Ozment taken from *Man and the Horse*, MMA.

## Recent Donations to the NSL

The Library's holdings of sporting art reference material has been greatly enhanced by the recent donations of Fred M. Burlew and Walter M. Jeffords, Jr. Mr. Burlew (author of *A Glow of Silver, the Life and Works of Henry Stull*, NSL Newsletter December 1985) gave the classification sheets based on his research of Stull's paintings. Stull, who lived 1851-1913, was a prolific portraitist, painting most of the racehorses of the period. Mr. Burlew's classification sheet lists for every painting the size and date of the painting, primary title of horse or race, color, sex, year foaled, sire, dam, markings, colors, background, breeder, owner, trainer and

jockey, notable races, provenance of painting, correspondence relating to painting, present location if known, and whether there is a photograph of the painting. Mr. Burlew has spent many years compiling this work from which scholars in the years to come will benefit. The NSL is grateful to Mr. Burlew for placing his work in its collection.

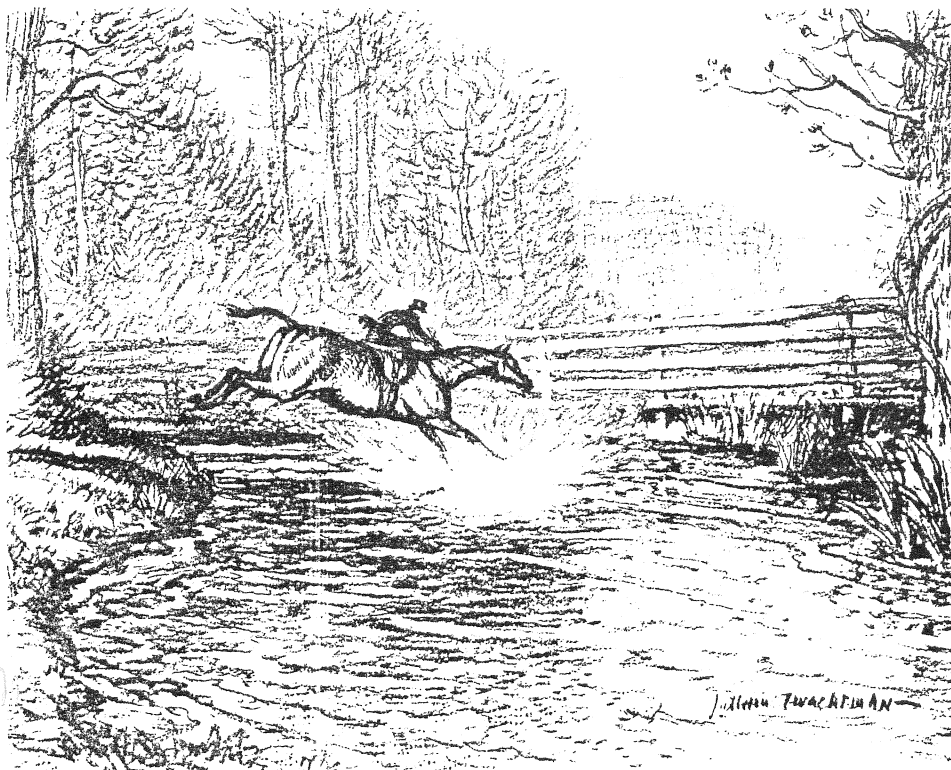
A gift of 39 transparencies of Racing Paintings from Walter Jeffords, Jr. was added to his original donation of 64 transparencies, along with a listing of the artist, title of painting, size of canvas, medium, and other notes. These transparencies are an important addition to the library's sporting art reference holdings.

The late Edward Durell was a collector and a long time supporter of the NSL, having given numerous volumes of sporting books over the years to the library. One outstanding donation was the original typescript manuscript of *The Old Man* submitted by Gordon Grand to the Derrydale Press in 1932. Mrs. Ruth Durell has recently given an additional 24 volumes, including 9 Derrydale Press Gordon Grand titles in their original publisher's brown paper wraps. These Derrydale Press volumes, in mint condition with wraps, are a rare and valuable gift.



## NSL Friends Membership Renewal

Starting June 1989, all NSL Friends renewal forms will be included in the June NSL Newsletter. This will facilitate book-keeping and in updating the membership list. If you have already renewed for 1989, please disregard the enclosed form; if you have not yet renewed, please do so at this time. Your contributions are used to support the services of the NSL and to maintain and expand the collection.



An illustration by J. Alden Twachtman from *The Silver Horn* written by Gordon Grand and published by The Derrydale Press. The NSL Edward Durell Collection.

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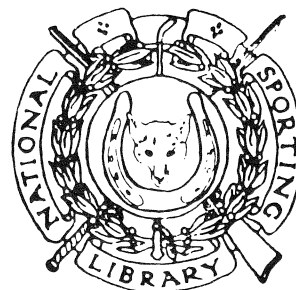
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